Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1-3. (cancelled)

4. (currently amended) A laser machining apparatus, comprising: a beam splitting means, a deflection means, a beam combining means and a machining lens, said beam splitting means splitting a laser beam into three laser beam splits different in optical path, said beam combining means aligning said optical paths of said three laser beam splits in almost ~~essentially~~ the same direction so that said three laser beam splits are incident on said machining lens:

wherein said beam combining means comprises:

a total reflection/transmission type beam combining means; and

a polarizing type beam combining means;

wherein said total reflection/transmission type beam combining means comprises a first triangular prism with a first inclined plane and a second triangular prism with a second inclined plane, wherein the first and second inclined planes face each other at a fixed distance, and wherein the optical paths of a first laser beam split and a second laser beam split incoming from two directions essentially perpendicular to each other are aligned in almost ~~essentially~~ the same direction by said total reflection/transmission type beam combining means;

and wherein said polarizing type beam combining means aligns said aligned optical paths of said first and second laser beam splits, which have a same polarization state, with the third beam split, which has a different

polarization state than the first and second laser beam splits and which is essentially perpendicular to the aligned first and second laser beam splits, in almost ~~essentially~~ the same direction.

5. (currently amended) The laser machining apparatus according to Claim 4, wherein said third beam split is split to form a fourth beam split and wherein said polarizing type beam combining means aligns said aligned optical paths of said first and second laser beam splits, which have the same polarization state, with the third beam split and the fourth beam split, which have the different polarization state than the first and second laser beam splits and which are essentially perpendicular to the aligned first and second laser beam splits, in almost ~~essentially~~ the same direction.